

A¹ means for trimming off the portion of the sheet that projects from the join plane; and

means for unmolding the part.--

REMARKS

In reply to the Restriction Requirement mailed March 6, 2002, Applicant provisionally elects Group I, claims 1-10 and 14-16, with traverse.

The Office Action asserts that the inventions of Groups I and II are distinct because the apparatus as claimed could be used to practice another and materially different process. Applicant respectfully disagrees.

For example, the method recited in claim 1 of Group I is for manufacturing a reinforced plastics material part from a sheet of drapable material using a mold comprising first and second mold portions that are relatively movable to each other. The apparatus recited in claim 11 of Group II is a mold for forming a reinforced plastics material part from a sheet of drapable material. The mold recited in claim 11 comprises first and second mold portions that are relatively movable to each other.

The method recited in claim 1 includes the steps of: placing the sheet on the first portion of the open mold; pressing the sheet against the first portion by means of one or more pushers mounted on the second portion and movable relative to the second portion; closing the mold; compacting the sheet; trimming off a portion of the sheet that projects from the join plane; and unmolding the part. Similarly, the mold recited in claim 11 includes: one or more pushers mounted on the second portion and movable relative to the second portion so as to press the sheet against the first portion before the mold is closed; and at least one trimmer means enabling trimming off the portion of the sheet that projects from the join plane once the mold is closed.

The Office Action refers to a process where multiple sheets are placed between the mold parts and are formed into a shaped composite material by simultaneous shaping and thermal pressing as being a materially different process in which the apparatus of Group II could be used. However, it is respectfully submitted that the process referred to in the Office Action is not excluded from the method of Group I. None of the claims exclude performing a process involving multiple sheets and simultaneous shaping and thermal pressing. In fact, claims 15 and 16 of Group I recite the step of preheating the sheet.

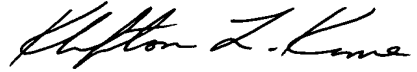
As such, the method of Group I and the apparatus of Group II could both be used in the process referred to in the Office Action. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner has not established that the method of Group I and the apparatus of Group II are distinct.

Furthermore, claim 17 is an apparatus claim corresponding to Group II that includes means for practicing the process of Group I. As such, claim 17 is a linking claim and must be examined with the elected invention. See MPEP § 806.05(e).

It is also respectfully submitted that the subject matter of all claims 1-17 is sufficiently related that a thorough search for the subject matter of any one group of claims would encompass a search for the subject matter of the remaining claims. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the search and examination of the entire application could be made without serious burden. See MPEP §803 in which it is stated that "if the search and examination of the entire application can be made without serious burden, the Examiner must examine it on the merits even though it includes claims to distinct or independent inventions" (emphasis added). It is respectfully submitted that this policy should apply in the present application in order to avoid unnecessary delay and expense to Applicants and duplicative examination by the Patent Office.

Thus, withdrawal of the Restriction Requirement is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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WPB:KLK/dmw

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Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

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